

Flu FAQs

Q. If the flu shot is free, why do I need to bring my Medicare card?

A. The City provides the flu shots free of charge, but Medicare reimburses the City for the cost of running the clinics. There is no cost to you. Reimbursement from Medicare helps make the clinics possible!

Q. If I don't have Medicare can I still get a flu shot?

A. Yes. The City will provide flu shots to anyone to needs them as long as supplies last.

Q. Why are flu shot clinics at drugstores and supermarkets starting so much earlier than the city's?

A. People have to pay for flu shots at businesses (usually \$25 per person, unless they have Medicare). Because these are for-profit clinics, they are able to purchase their vaccine privately and can start their clinics whenever they want. The City receives vaccines that are purchased as part of a Federal contract and so must follow state guidelines about when to start clinics.

Q. Isn't November too late to get a flu shot?

A. NO! November is a great time to get a flu shot. The flu season in Massachusetts typically peaks in February, so even December is not too late.

Q. I thought flu shots were only for people over age 65. Why do I see young people at clinics?

A. People over age 65 are at-risk for suffering complications from the flu. But so are people of all ages with asthma, diabetes, or other chronic diseases. Young children and pregnant women are also at-risk. It also makes sense for people who have a lot of contact with the public to get flu shots, particularly health care workers. People taking care of babies and those with elderly or severely ill relatives at home should also get a flu shot.

Q. Can the flu shot make me sick?

A. Flu vaccine is made from inactivated (killed) virus. It can not cause the flu. However, it takes up to two weeks to provide full protection, so it is possible that if you are exposed to the flu shortly after getting a flu shot, you will still get sick. Also, if you are exposed to the flu *before* getting a flu shot, you can still get sick. People who are allergic to eggs, people who have had a serious reaction to a vaccine, and people with Guillan-Barre syndrome *should not* have a flu shot.

Q. Can I bring my children to a flu shot clinic?

A. We have a very limited amount of vaccine for children age 10 and over. Children age 9 and younger have to get two doses of the vaccine and so need to visit their pediatrician for their flu shots.